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## DOH-OKALOOSA URGES VACCINATION AS FLU SEASON INTENSIFIES



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**Ft. Walton Beach, Fla.** — With the 2016-2017 flu season in full swing and influenza activity increasing across the state, it is critical that all Floridians get the flu vaccine to protect against infection and help prevent the spread of seasonal flu to others. It is never too late to get your flu shot. While most cases of flu are mild, there are exceptions.

“Medical providers in Okaloosa County have seen a sharp increase in flu activity during the past couple of weeks, much like the national trend,” stated Dr. Karen A. Chapman, Director of the Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County. “With this increase in activity, it’s important for the public, especially those at high risk, to protect themselves against the flu.”

Flu activity is on the rise in Florida, particularly in groups at high risk for severe illness such as children, pregnant women, people with underlying chronic conditions and people over the age of 65. Visits to emergency departments for influenza are also increasing in these high risk groups. The department continues to urge residents to reduce their risk of severe illness from infection by getting vaccinated against influenza. This is especially important for individuals at high risk for severe illness.

The annual flu vaccine is safe and is the most effective way to protect yourself and your loved ones. The flu vaccine is recommended for everyone six months and older, including pregnant women. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for your body to develop protection against the flu. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends people get injectable flu shots. Nasal spray vaccine is not recommended for this flu season because of concerns about its effectiveness.

It is also essential to practice good hygiene by properly and frequently washing your hands to help prevent the spread of seasonal flu. Make it a habit to clean and disinfect commonly used surfaces in your home, school or office. You can take additional steps to ward off the flu by coughing or sneezing into a tissue or your elbow and avoiding touching your face.

The flu vaccine is offered in many other convenient locations, including doctor's offices, clinics, retail stores, pharmacies, health centers and by many employers and schools. Visit [flushot.healthmap.org](http://flushot.healthmap.org) to search for a flu vaccine location near you.

For further information regarding influenza surveillance information, messaging and guidance, visit the influenza homepage at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/floridaflu>.

### **About the Florida Department of Health**

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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# Infant Mortality Rate per 1,000 2005-2014

